

CULTURAL DISPARITY IN JHUMPA LAHIRI'S "THE NAMESAKE"

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ABSTRACT

This paper trace out the cultural disparity in Jhumpa Lahiri's The Namesake. Nowadays the cultural disparity is the central concept in literature. It deals with cultural, mostly who are assuming new cultural and they face the problems with embracing in host culture. The main factor cultural disparity leads on the problems of adopting a different culture. Lahiri's The Namesake is highlighted specially the character of Ashima Ganguli who settles in Massachusetts and how she passed their life in a foreign country. With lots of suffering.

So this paper shows the character of Ashima Ganguli under the issue of cultural disparity. The Namesake is not only the dramatization of the Diasporic conflicts immigrants go through due to their confrontation with an all new foreign culture, but also an examination of an dilemmatic clash between two different generations within an migrated family. This paper also give the way to future researchers to analyse Jhumpa Lahiri's The Namesake in the areas of migration, alienation, parental love, quest for identity and so on,

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INTRODUCTION

This paper will find out the different diasporic features in the fiction of Jhumpa Lahiri in the Namesake. It is right to say that Jhumpa Lahiri is the called of Indian migrant. "she thinks that the question of identity is always a difficult one for those who are culturally displaced and growing up in two world"(Lahiri).She concerns about those people who passed their life as Diasporic with a dual state which creates confusion and clashes. She shows the quest of Identity and sense of dislocation and assimilation in her novel. Diaspora is the communities of people living together in one country. Lahiri's works display the uprooted nation from homeland and focus attention on to absorbed new culture in the host country.

"All Diaspora are unhappy, but every Diaspora is unhappy in its own way. Diaspora refers to people who do not feel comfortable with their non-hyphenated identities as indicated on their passport. They are lodge with in an episteme of real or imagined displacements, self imposed sense of exile; they are haunted by specters, by ghosts arising from within that encourage irredentist or separatist movements". (Vijay Mishra, the Literature of Indian Diaspora: Theorizing the Diasporic Imaginary).

Diaspora Literature is a very vast concept and an umbrella term. Generally, Diasporic literature deals with alienation, displacement, existential rootlessness, nostalgia, quest of identity. Jhumpa Lahiri is an illustrious American Author of Indian. She was born in London in 1967 to Bangali immigrant parents. She was educated in the USA and she wrote short stories, she won the Pulitzer Prize for fiction and the PEN/Hemingway Award. Her stories deal with the sensitive problems in the lives of Indians or Indian immigrants with issues such as marital problems,

the sense of loss, and grief, harsh traumatic circumstances diasporic experiences.

Lahiri deals the theme with clash of cultures and the mismatch the cultures or cultural disparity, the conflicts of adjustment and most impressive intricate ties between two generations.

The novel exhibits how the immigrants face cultural problems in the foreign country. Lahiri shows that the immigrants in their enthusiasm to lose to their own cultural beliefs and customs, gradually absorb the cultural ways of the lost country too; The Namesake express the theme of cultural conflict and identity crisis, diasporic trauma, cultural disparity, transnational identity and trauma of culture dislocation.

This story denotes the perception of Indian Bengali family from Calcutta a new married couple Ashima and Ashoke. After their arrival in Boston, Ashoke manages to find a job as a university teacher. Ashima remains at home and does the house work alone. They experience a different type of cultural conflict experienced in the new land. They feel cultural and emotional dislocation and try to effort to settle 'home' in the new land.

After her marriage Ashima moves flies alone to be with her husband with a heavy heart and lots of instructions from her family members. Ashima often feels upset and homesickness in her room." She often feels emotionally comfortable home, full of so many loving ones and yearns to go back. Home is a 'mystic place of desire' in the immigrants lost in the memories of her 'home'" (Lahiri). She reads Bangali Short Stories, poems from the Bangali Magazines which she has brought with her. She waits the letter of her parents which she keeps collecting in her white bag and re-reads again and again. But the most "frightening 'experience for her home' unobserved by those she loved, and to 'raise a child in a country where she is related to no one, where she knows so little where life seems so tentative and spare "(The Name sake: 2003). She raises the question of Motherhood in Diaspora where she is doomed to stay at home on her won, feed children and do the housework. "I do not want to raise Gogol alone in this country. It's not right " (Lahiri, 2003:33).

Gradually she learns how to be independent. How to take care of her child, she walks out alone in the market with her baby, she communicates with strangers, gradually she grows confident. But "the feeling of displacement is felt more by her, when the transfer of her husband out in Boston because Ashoke is 'hired as an Assistant Professor. There are no streetlights, no public transportation, no stores for miles'. It makes Ashima full 'more drastic more distressing than the move from Calcutta to Cambridge had been'. She feels herself lonely and alienated in foreign land, Ashima begins to realise that 'being a foreigner..... is a sort of lifelong pregnancy. She feels that her previous life has vanished and more complicated" (Lahiri, The Namesake).She feels so deprived, too isolated, however, many times she keeps crying horrendously away from the eyes of everybody even her husband.

Ashima and Ashoke make the circle of Bangali acquaintance. They "all become friends only for the reason that they all "come from Calcutta" (38). They celebrate different customs and ceremonies like marriages death festivals etc. together like as India. So that they preserves their culture in a new land.

Lahiri makes efforts to preserve their 'home culture' in their new homes. The Namesake portrays that the characters do not only suffer from homesickness and nostalgic memories of past life in their home land, but also from the host land in that even in the eyes of the present society they live in are looked upon as foreigners. As a result, they can neither belong to the homeland nor the host land.

This novel shows the cultural hybridity, globalization and inter connectedness of the modern world and rethinks

conventional immigrant's experience. Lahiri focus the problem of cultural diversity in the multicultural united states, and she argues that the struggle to grasp a transnational identity becomes an urgent issue for immigrants in the new land. She represents Gogol as someone who is confused about his identity she also presents Gogol as a prototypical transnational agent who lives between two different worlds with the possibility of creating multiplicity of identities.

Lahiri's Character attempts to show the issue of identities in a process of cultural formation. The issue of cultural conflict are different for first and second generation. "Their cultural identity formation includes pieces of cultural inheritance to incorporate into their lives as Americans which is similar to Hall's idea of 'being' and 'becoming' of cultural identity (Hall:70:1989). Redefining homeland becomes a matter of redefining identity". Lahiri focus on the tension between past and present complicates "Hall's idea of 'being' and 'becoming'. For instance, Gogol lives between the world of past & present with dual identity. Identity cannot be discarded or adopted. The value of different culture give birth to dual identity but the original identity can never be removed".

Lahiri's *The Namesake* is one of the world's unique literary works endeavors to mirror the actual realities an immigrant family is determined to undertake. Lahiri who has experienced diasporic life both as an immigrant and as a woman, points out how suffering and melancholy emigrated life could be, specifically for a woman. The dilemma brought about homesickness and nostalgia of the homeland, personified by the character of Ashima, the dilemma arises from the clash between first and second immigrant generation that leads to an unbearable ceaseless conflict. Lahiri's work is not only a criticism and satirization of faceless, cold blooded American society, neither is it merely a depiction of the melancholy and agony the immigrants go through, but also a challenge of the common assumption embracing diasporic life as a paradise. Lahiri's *The Namesake* is a message for today's generation and the coming generation that diasporic life does not necessarily mean establishing a utopian, peaceful life as publicly assumed, instead most immigrants end with displacement, homesickness and painful cultural disparity.

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